

A34 SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 1988 ... R

THE WASHINGTON POST

S. Koreans Demonstrate Against Chun

Pressure Mounts on Former President to Apologize, Return Money

By Peter Maass
Special to The Washington Post

SEOUL, Nov. 19—Chanting "Arrest Chun Doo Hwan," thousands of South Korean students clashed today with riot police who fired tear gas to break up a march to demand quick punishment for the disgraced ex-president.

The march drew middle-class support and swelled to include well over 10,000 people punching fists in the air as they strode past luxury hotels and department stores in the heart of Seoul. The demonstration is likely to increase pressure on Chun to agree to a humbling apology and other concessions in exchange for immunity from prosecution on corruption charges.

The opposition-controlled National Assembly further increased pressure on Chun today, conducting its second day of televised hearings into the bloody repression by Chun's government of a 1980 student uprising in Kwangju. After testimony yesterday from opposition leader Kim Dae Jung, who accused Chun of personal responsibility for the hundreds of deaths in Kwangju, senior generals and defense officials testified today about the controversial events leading up to the decision to send crack troops into the city.

South Koreans have been riveted by the live broadcasts of testimony about the bloody event, in which the government says at least 191 people died. Dissident activists say the death toll may have been as high as 2,000.

Alongside these developments, local newspapers are quoting unnamed aides to Chun as saying the ex-president has decided to give in to the mounting calls for his political atonement. The aides are quoted as saying that Chun, a general who seized power in a 1979 coup, will apologize early next week for his alleged corruption, offer to return illegally acquired wealth to the government and leave Seoul for retirement in the countryside. These are the conditions the opposition has set for excusing Chun from possible criminal prosecution.

However, newspaper reports about Chun's plans have proven unreliable in recent weeks. The aides to Chun and President Roh Tae

Woo, who has become deeply involved in delicate contacts with his mentor in a bid to avert a crisis, apparently have been using selective press leaks as part of their political shadow-boxing.

Seasoned observers believe that while it now appears likely that Chun will make some kind of apology next week, it is not certain whether the apology will embrace the full package of concessions demanded by the mainstream opposition parties.

The rally and march today drove home the point that South Korea will remain in a tense political standoff for as long as the Chun issue is unresolved. The students and dissidents want the former president arrested and put on trial for power abuses and corruption. One student speaker at the rally said, "The hell with Chun's apology. We will pursue him wherever he goes. He must pay for his crimes."

The students and dissidents are expected to continue their protests if Chun avoids arrest by accepting the three-point package of concessions. But the students' middle-class support could fade away, leaving them isolated.

The principal charge of corruption is that Chun forced millions of dollars in contributions to a foundation that he set up, allegedly to serve as a power base.

Chun's backers contend that most of the corruption charges are fabrications, while the mistakes Chun did make are being exaggerated by a lynch-mob mentality.

Chun's backers claim he was a military patriot who filled a political vacuum after president Park Chung Hee's 1979 assassination, oversaw the nation's economic miracle and organized South Korea's first peaceful transfer of power. His fatal mistake, they say, was to balk at seeking popular support.

The continuing turbulence represents a threat to President Roh, whom the students oppose because he is a former general, hand-picked by Chun last year to take over the ruling Democratic Justice Party. However, Roh, who was elected president last December after the opposition failed to agree on a single candidate, has responded to the outrage against Chun-era corruption by jailing more than a half dozen of the ex-president's closest rel-

atives, including his two brothers. Seeking to end the volatile controversy, Roh reportedly pressed Chun this week to accept the opposition demands.

Today's demonstration closely followed the pattern of a similar anti-Chun protest staged by students and dissidents two weeks ago. More than 5,000 people gathered for an afternoon rally at Taehagno, a student neighborhood where the main banner said, "Let's punish Chun Doo Hwan, culprit of corruption and the Kwangju massacre." After the rally, waves of students threw rocks and firebombs at the squadrons of riot police blocking the path to the center of town.

Many of the students slipped out through narrow alleys in the neighborhood and regrouped downtown, where they drew support from thousands of middle-class workers. Waving colorful banners and singing protest songs, the crowd marched unimpeded until dusk fell. The riot police used an armor-plated mobile tear-gas launcher to break up the march, but groups of students fought back with more rocks and gasoline bombs, setting at least one police bus on fire.